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Early in 1942, German submarine wolf packs, hovering close to the East Coast, began a daily ritual: firing torpedoes into U.S. freighter convoys moving towards Britain with essential war supplies. In the first eight months of 1942, before the slaughter was stopped, Nazi U-boats had destroyed almost a million tons of shipping.

Today the potential enemy is the far more powerful Soviet Union with its mighty fleet which includes 377 nuclear or diesel-electric submarines, a far cry from the World War II prototypes. Today these Soviet U-boats prow the two oceans as part of the Kremlin bid for domination of the world's sea-lanes in case of war.

These Soviets subs dive deeper and run faster and longer underwater than their World War II predecessors. They pack technologically advanced armaments undreamed of in the 1940s, including submarine-launched missiles which could reach American shores — say, California's Silicon Valley — in minutes.

Once missiles have been launched, it will be too late. So the idea is to stop the Soviet subs before they launch. How to stop these Soviet underwater vessels is the mission of the U.S. Navy's land-based and carrier-based airplanes.

The writer recently accompanied a Navy anti-submarine warfare training mission on a P-3C Orion, named after the heaven's mighty Greek hunter. I was, for the five-hour patrol of several hundred square miles of the Pacific Ocean, part of Navy Squadron VP-46. Operational missions go on night and day in all kinds of weather. Groups of young Americans, usually 12 in number, assemble on bases all over the Pacific — Alaska, Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, Diego

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The foe lurking under the waves

Garcia in the Indian Ocean, Guam, Hawaii — for what is truly a "needle-in-the-haystack" operation — looking for Soviet submarines.

The plane I flew in, a heavily camouflaged version of the old Lockheed L-188 Electra, a four-engine turboprop commercial transport perfect for maritime surveillance and anti-submarine warfare, is jam-packed with the most advanced avionics and armament — infrared detection, acoustic tape recorders, a sonobuoy system and a digital navigation computer plus other equipment which nobody is talking about, like the Harpoon missiles which can be launched from 50 miles away and which can lock on the enemy sub.

According to the *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute*, (October 1982), the Soviet Naval Order of Battle in the Pacific consists of one-third of its total submarine fleet, one aircraft carrier, 13 cruisers, 20 destroyers, 50 frigates, 440 aircraft, and personnel amounting to 128,000 officers and men. That is quite an armada for a peace-loving Soviet Union and quite a distance from the Soviet motherland.

One can get an idea of how dangerous the Soviet submarine fleet would be in case of war or the mere threat of war to a country like Japan, utterly dependent on free sea-lane passage for 88 percent of its energy, 90 percent of essential raw

materials, 70 percent of its food requirements and virtually all of its export trade.

The ASEAN countries — Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand — and the Pacific Rim countries know that the greatest threat to their existence comes from the Soviet SSG/SSGN nuclear-powered attack submarines and their cruise missiles.

The Pacific today is crowded not only with Soviet men-o'-war but with oceanographic research vessels, fixed ocean surveillance acoustic systems, naval and air long-range reconnaissance aircraft, merchant ships, fishing trawlers, electronic intelligence stations, land-based over-the-horizon radar, and of course the inevitable KGB and GRU Soviet intelligence networks. All of these elements of the Soviet Navy's reconnaissance system are supported by ocean surveillance satellites, powered by nuclear reactors. Such a spacecraft, called the Cosmos 954, in 1978 fell out of the sky and landed, radioactivity and all, in northern Canada.

Another, Cosmos 1402, recently plunged harmlessly from space over the Indian Ocean.

While all eyes are turned to Western Europe and the overwhelming threat of Soviet missiles directed at the centers of European civilization, the Pacific Rim countries are overlooked by public opinion. It is here in this vast area where friends of America, like Japan, the ASEAN countries, Australia and New Zealand live in an uneasy peace, that Soviet Admiral of the Fleet Sergei G. Gorshkov, commander-in-chief of the Soviet Navy, musters his powerful armada over and under the sea and in the sky. With a Northern Fleet in the Atlantic which outclasses and outmatches the U.S. Navy and a third, the Baltic Fleet, plus the missile-armed submarines, the Soviet Union is either ahead of or enjoys parity with the United States and its NATO allies.